

# Firearm Registrations in Hawaii, 2019

Department of the Attorney General

• Crime Prevention & Justice Assistance Division

• [ag.hawaii.gov/cpja](http://ag.hawaii.gov/cpja)

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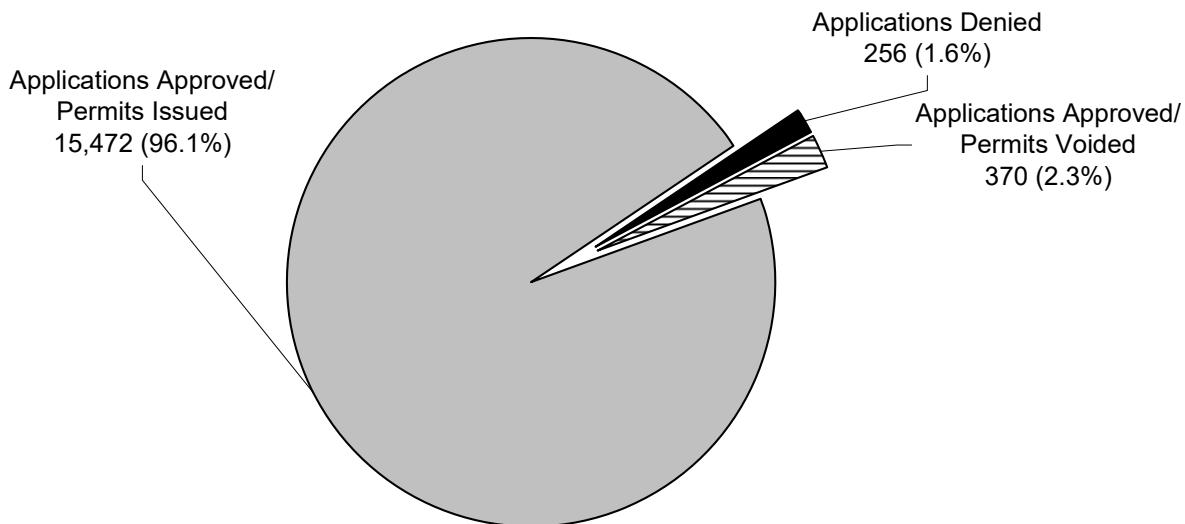
Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS) § 134-14 requires the county police departments to provide to the Department of the Attorney General a monthly report of firearm registration activity. The data from these reports were compiled in order to provide the statistics presented herein for Calendar Year 2019. This is the twentieth annual publication of *Firearm Registrations in Hawaii*.

## **Permit Applications Processed, Issued, Voided, and Denied**

A total of 16,098 personal/private firearm permit applications were processed statewide during 2019, marking a 10.9% decrease from 18,070 applications processed in 2018. Of the applications processed in 2019, 96.1% were approved and resulted in issued permits; 2.3% were approved but subsequently voided after the applicants failed to return for their permits within the specified time period; and 1.6% were denied due to one or more disqualifying factors. Figure 1 provides additional information. Denials are described in greater detail throughout this report.

**Figure 1: Firearm Permit Application Outcomes,  
State of Hawaii, 2019**

16,098 Applications Processed



## Registrations and Importations

The 15,472 permits issued statewide in 2019 cover a total of 39,467 firearms registered throughout the year, resulting in an 8.3% decrease from the 43,033 firearms registered during 2018. Just over half (20,037, or 50.8%) of the firearms registered during 2019 were imported from out-of-state, with the balance accounted for by transfers of firearms that were previously registered in Hawaii. Independent estimates made during the late-1990s by the Department of the Attorney General and the City and County of Honolulu Police Department conservatively placed the number of privately owned firearms in Hawaii at “at least one million.” Adding to that rough tally during the 2000 through 2019 period, a total of 643,757 firearms were registered (including some more than once, by different owners) and 338,404 were imported, while an unknown number of firearms permanently left the state.

## Permits and Registrations, by Firearm Type

In the State of Hawaii, annual permits are issued in order to acquire an unlimited number of longarms (rifles and shotguns), while single-use permits are issued to acquire specific handguns. By firearm type, 50.3% (7,789) of the permits issued during 2019 were to acquire handguns, while 49.7% (7,683) were longarm permits. The tally of handgun permits is perennially confounded, however, as some of the county police departments issue a single permit listing all handguns that will be acquired simultaneously from the same source (i.e., one permit per transaction, per HRS § 134-2(e)), while the other departments issue one permit per handgun even if they are acquired in the same transaction.

Longarms accounted for 55.6% (21,947) of all firearms registered during 2019 (39,467). Broken out further, rifles and shotguns comprised 45.5% (17,969) and 10.1% (3,978) of total registrations, respectively. The remaining 44.4% (17,520) of firearms registered throughout 2019 were handguns.

## County Comparisons and Registration Trends

Table 1 shows the distribution of firearm registration activity during 2019 across the four counties and for the State of Hawaii overall.

**Table 1: Firearm Registration Activity,  
State of Hawaii and Counties, 2019**

	C&C of Honolulu	Hawaii County	Maui County	Kauai County	State Total
Applications Processed	10,474	3,013	1,600	1,011	<b>16,098</b>
Applications Approved/ Permits Issued	10,079	2,899	1,530	964	<b>15,472</b>
Applications Approved/ Permits Voided	284	18	38	30	<b>370</b>
Applications Denied	111	96	32	17	<b>256</b>
Denial Rate*	1.1%	3.2%	2.0%	1.7%	<b>1.6%</b>
Firearms Registered	24,879	7,003	4,667	2,918	<b>39,467</b>
Firearms Imported	13,087	3,506	1,849	1,595	<b>20,037</b>

\* The most comparable national figure is a 4.2% estimated average denial rate in 2015 for jurisdictions that require a buyer to obtain, after a local agency-conducted background check, a government-issued document that must be presented to a seller before the buyer can receive a firearm (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2017).

As compared to Hawaii's resident population distribution, firearm registration activity occurred disproportionately across the four counties during 2019 (see Figure 2). (If the counties' registration activity occurred in equal proportion to their respective population sizes, then the three bars depicted for each county in Figure 2 would be of equal value.)

**Figure 2: County Distribution of Permit Applications Processed and Denied versus Resident Population Distribution, 2019**

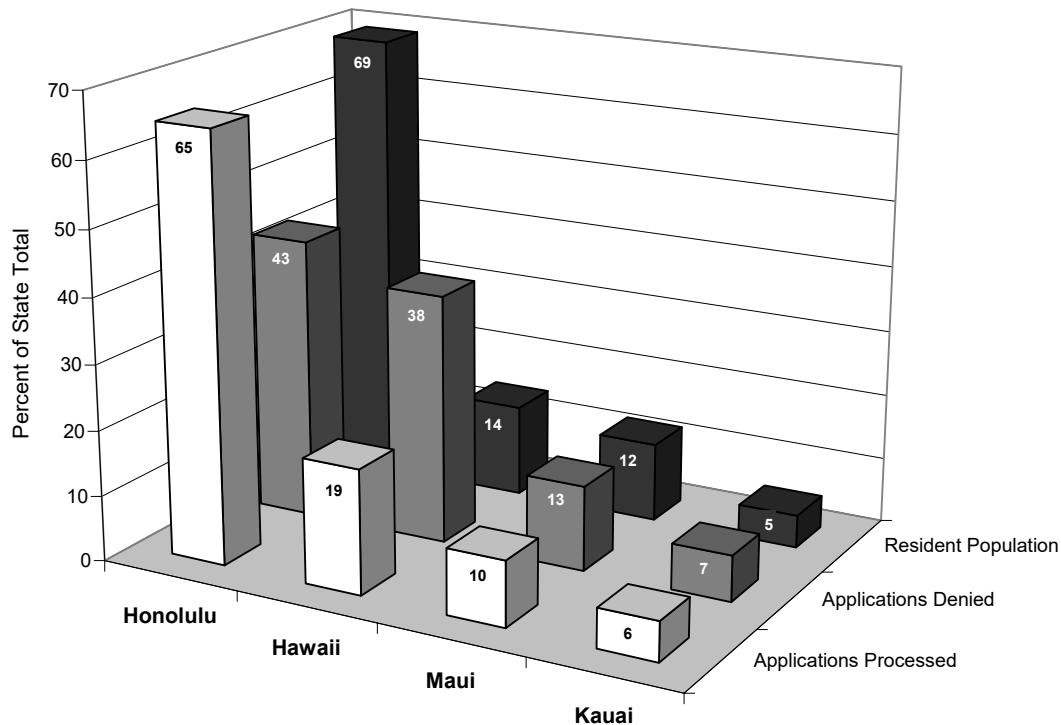
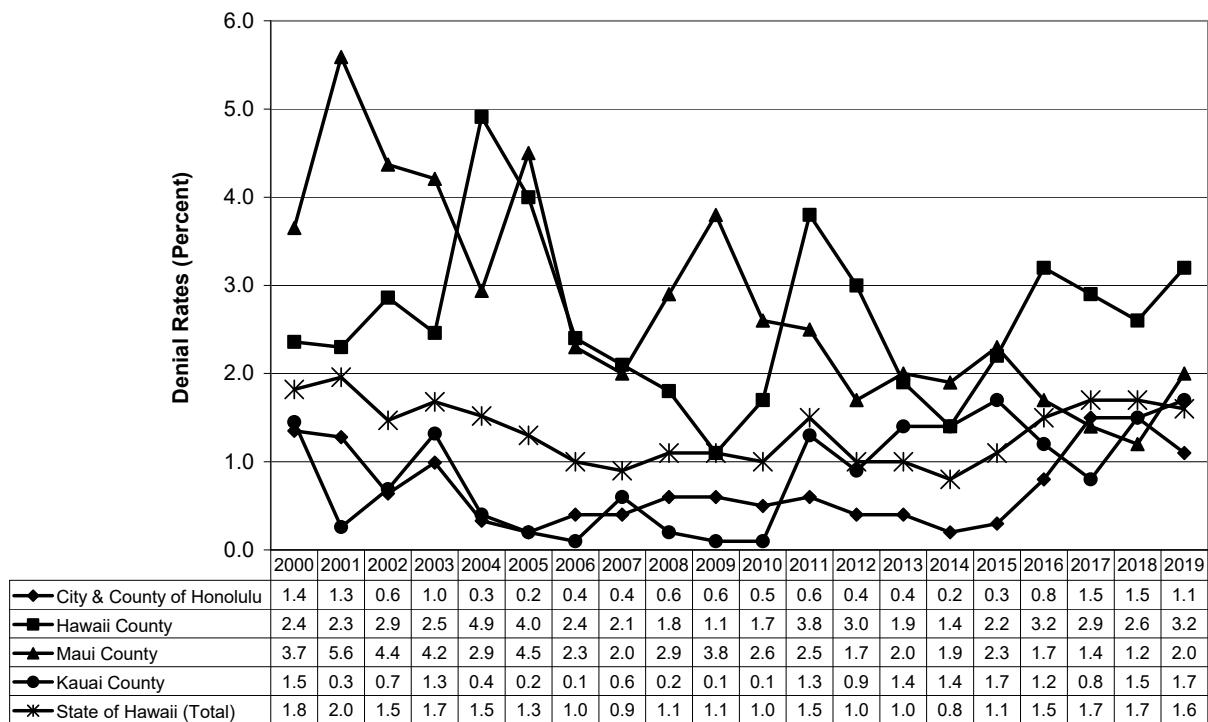


Figure 3 (next page) presents historical data on permit application denial rates for the State of Hawaii and each of the four counties.

**Figure 3: Firearm Permit Application Denial Rates,  
State of Hawaii and Counties, 2000-2019**



Firearm registration activity increased dramatically over the course of the 20 years for which these data have been systematically compiled and reported (see Figure 4). From 2000 through 2019, the number of statewide permit applications annually processed increased by 148.1%, the number of firearms annually registered leaped 189.8%, and the number of firearms annually imported rose 177.2%.

**Figure 4: Firearm Registration Trends,  
State of Hawaii, 2000-2019**

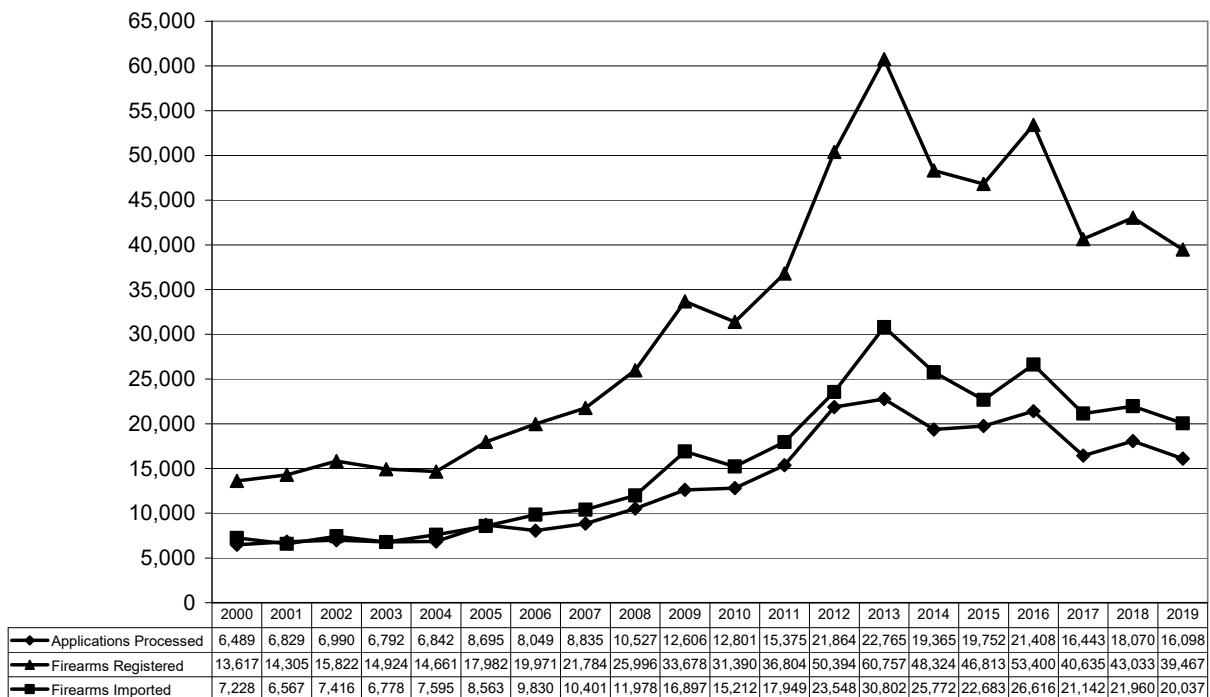
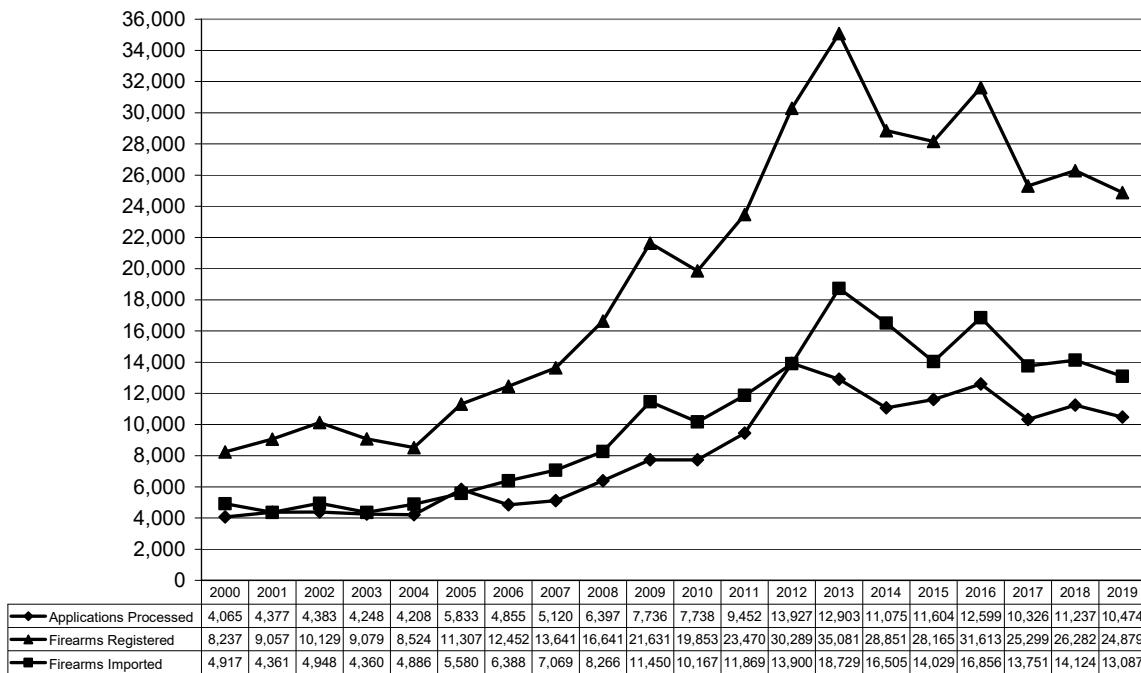


Figure 5 shows that, between 2000 and 2019 in the City and County of Honolulu, the annual tally of permits processed increased 157.7%, the number of firearms annually registered surged 202.0%, and the number of firearms annually imported climbed 166.2%.

**Figure 5: Firearm Registration Trends,  
City & County of Honolulu, 2000-2019**



As shown in Figure 6, the number of permits processed annually in Hawaii County during the 2000-2019 period rose 162.9%, the number of firearms annually registered increased 141.2%, and the number of firearms annually imported leaped 182.5%.

**Figure 6: Firearm Registration Trends,  
Hawaii County, 2000-2019**

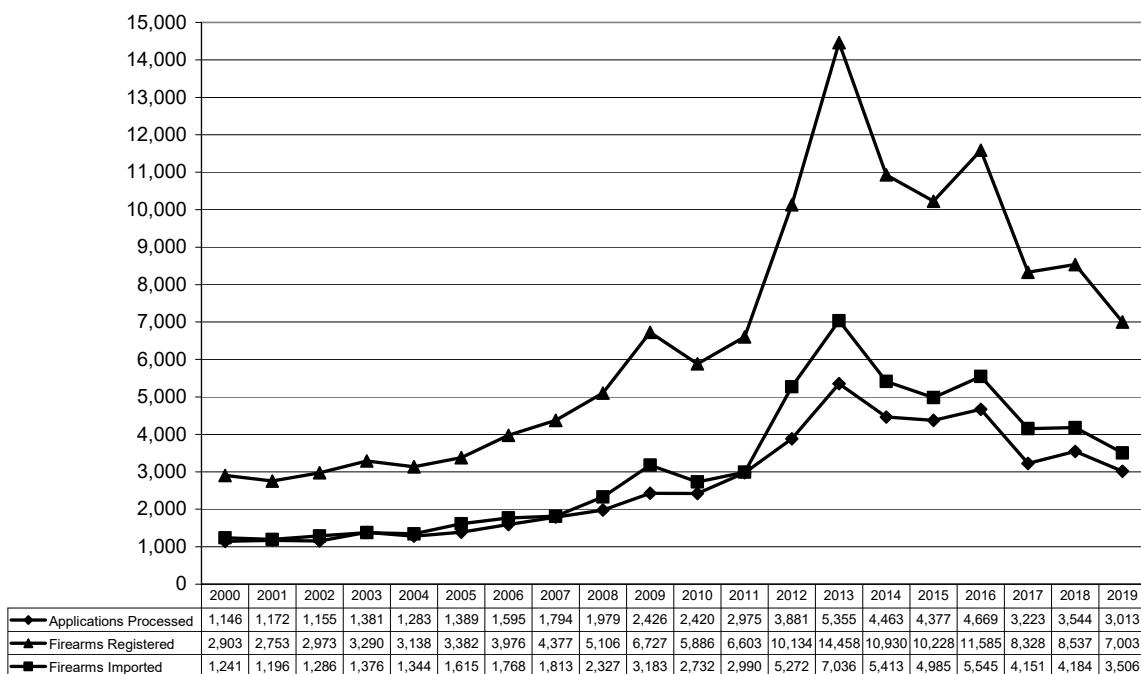
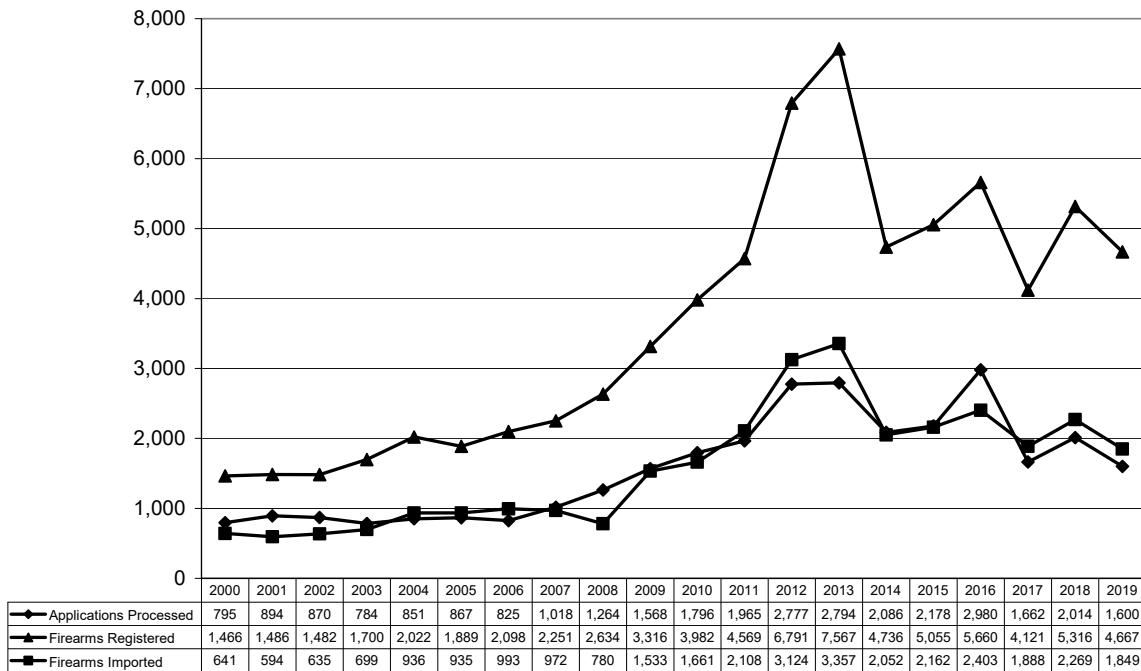


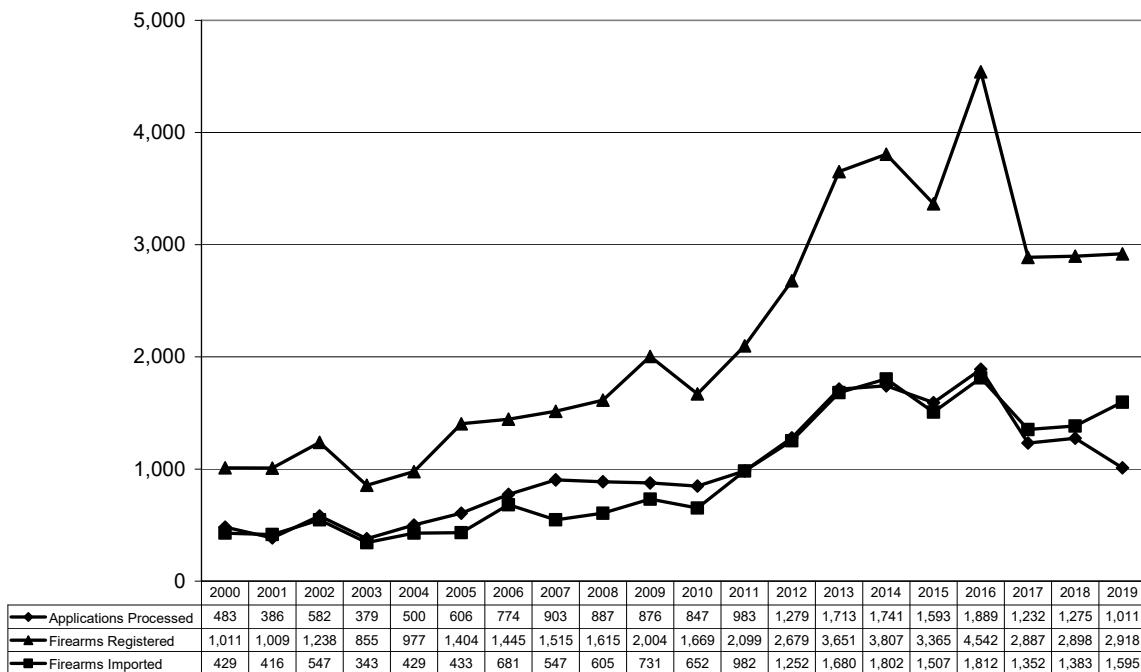
Figure 7 reveals that, between 2000 and 2019 in Maui County, the annual number of permits processed increased 101.3%, the number of firearms annually registered soared 218.0%, and the tally of firearms annually imported climbed 188.5%.

**Figure 7: Firearm Registration Trends,  
Maui County, 2000-2019**



As shown in Figure 8, the number of permits processed annually in Kauai County from 2000 through 2019 increased 109.3%, the number of firearms registered surged 188.6%, and the number of firearms imported skyrocketed 271.8%.

**Figure 8: Firearm Registration Trends,  
Kauai County, 2000-2019**



## Permit Application Denials

As noted earlier, 1.6% (256) of all permit applications in Hawaii during 2019 were denied for cause. The majority of the denials were for longarm (189, or 73.8%) rather than handgun (67, or 26.2%) permit applications. Following a trend since this annual report was first published, longarm permit applications in 2019 were denied at a rate (2.3%) that is roughly triple the denial rate for handgun permit applications (0.8%).

More than one-fifth (57, or 22.3%) of the denials in 2019 were due to the applicants' prior criminal convictions, while 1.6% (4) were due to pending cases.

It is a misdemeanor in the State of Hawaii to provide falsified information on firearm permit applications, unless the falsified information pertains to criminal or mental health histories, in which case it is a felony offense (HRS § 134-17). In 2019, falsified criminal or mental health information, or both, were provided in 43.4% (111) of the 256 denial cases; falsified information pertaining to anything other than criminal or mental health histories was provided in 5.9% (15) of the cases; and no falsified information was provided in 50.4% (129) of the cases.

Table 2 presents broad categorical data on the reasons for denied permit applications.

**Table 2: Reasons for Denied Firearm Permit Applications, State of Hawaii, 2019**

	#	%*
Mental Health-Related Issue**	154	60.2
"Other" Criminal Offense	49	19.1
Medical Marijuana Patient***	28	10.9
Domestic Violence****	22	8.6
Drug Offense	11	4.3
Restraining/Protective Order	11	4.3
Disqualifying Juvenile Offense	1	0.4
Not a U.S. citizen	1	0.4

\* Figures do not total 100% due to multiple reasons for some denials.

\*\* Includes adverse mental health diagnoses and treatment, and drug or alcohol abuse/addiction and treatment. Denials for such reasons can be satisfactorily cleared with a verified doctor's note stating that the applicant is no longer adversely affected. While an original denial cannot be appealed or overturned, a new application may be submitted and the appropriate permit will be issued. At least one of the state's major healthcare providers recommends denial for virtually any sort of mental health issue or treatment noted in their clients' historical medical records, and does not provide a means to obtain a clearance, leaving such applicants to seek clearance from outside doctors.

\*\*\* Former medical marijuana patients may successfully apply one year after the expiration of their medical marijuana card.

\*\*\*\* Includes domestic violence-related offenses and counseling/treatment.

Table 3 provides a breakdown of information entered into a description field for each denial.

**Table 3: Descriptions of Firearm Permit Application Denials,  
State of Hawaii, 2019**

	256 Total Denials	#	%*
abuse of family/household member	7	2.7	
abuse of family/household member + domestic violence counseling	1	0.4	
abuse of family/household member + mental health issue	1	0.4	
alcohol abuse + depression	1	0.4	
alcohol abuse treatment	13	5.1	
alcohol and substance abuse treatment	2	0.8	
alcohol dependency	2	0.8	
anger management counseling	8	3.1	
anger management counseling + medical marijuana patient	1	0.4	
assault	15	5.9	
assault (domestic violence) + theft + forgery + burglary	1	0.4	
assault + abuse of family/household member	3	1.2	
assault + mental health issue	1	0.4	
assault + restraining order	1	0.4	
assault + robbery	1	0.4	
assault + theft + substance abuse treatment	1	0.4	
battery + abuse of family/household member	1	0.4	
convicted felon (unspecified)	2	0.8	
crime of violence (unspecified)	5	2.0	
disorderly conduct	1	0.4	
disqualifying juvenile offenses + substance abuse treatment	1	0.4	
domestic violence counseling	1	0.4	
domestic violence counseling + former marijuana user	1	0.4	
drug offense	1	0.4	
harassment	8	3.1	
harassment + mental health issue	1	0.4	
legal guardian of minor who has restraining order	2	0.8	
manslaughter/reckless homicide	2	0.8	
medical marijuana patient	27	10.5	
mental health issue	105	41.0	
mental health issue + alcohol and drug addiction	1	0.4	
mental health issue + former marijuana user	1	0.4	
mentally unstable (based on prior law enforcement contact)	1	0.4	
no response from California re battery and disorderly conduct incidents	1	0.4	
no response from California re theft charge	1	0.4	
no response from court re felony disposition	5	2.0	
no response re 1997 mainland drug arrest	1	0.4	
not a U.S. citizen	1	0.4	
positive field test for illicit drug use	1	0.4	
reckless endangering	1	0.4	
reckless endangering (domestic violence-related)	1	0.4	
resisting arrest + harassment	1	0.4	
restraining order	8	3.1	
robbery	1	0.4	
statutory rape	1	0.4	
substance abuse treatment	10	3.9	
warrant (cruelty to animals + gambling)	1	0.4	
warrant (unspecified)	1	0.4	
warrant (unspecified) + burglary + drug offenses	1	0.4	

\* Due to rounding, figures do not total 100%.

## **Licenses to Carry Firearms**

Hawaii's county police departments also process license applications for the carrying of firearms in public. Statewide in 2019, 162 employees of private security firms applied for and were issued carry licenses, and three (1.8%) were denied. A total of nine private citizens applied for a carry license in 2019, including four in the City and County of Honolulu, three in Hawaii County, and one each in Maui County and Kauai County; all nine applicants were denied by the respective county's chief of police.

## **Confiscations**

Four "assault pistols," three "short-barrel rifles," and one "short-barrel shotgun," as defined and prohibited by state law, were confiscated by the firearm registration personnel statewide in 2019.

## **Acknowledgements**

This report was prepared with input and assistance from the county police departments' firearm registration personnel. As the volume of registration activity documented in this report demonstrates, these dedicated professionals work hard to serve their communities.

### Hawaii County Police Department

**Arlene Young**, Senior Police Records Clerk

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The entire Firearms Registration Section, in particular:

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### Kauai County Police Department

**Scott Yamaguchi**, Weapons Registration Clerk

### Maui County Police Department

**Melanie Wong**, Firearms Registration Clerk

## **Reference**

Bureau of Justice Statistics (November 2017). *Background checks for firearms transfers, 2015: Statistical Tables*. U.S. Department of Justice: Office of Justice Programs. NCJ 250978.